

HE'S 60 but nobody bats an eyelid at Sean Connery playing the lover of 32-year-old Michelle Pfeiffer in *The Russia House*.

Connery, named "Sexiest Man Alive" by America's *People* magazine earlier this year, looks amused when asked about the romance his character has with stunningly beautiful Pfeiffer.

"The love story is not very steamy and not the sort of thing where you're going to get your rocks off," he says with a grin. "But it's tasteful and true to the film. Besides, if I was too old I'd stop doing it!"

In *The Russia House*, based on John Le Carre's novel and adapted for the screen by playwright Tom Stoppard, Connery plays a British publisher drawn into the espionage world when a mysterious Russian woman asks him to publish a manuscript which could change the course of the world.

"I adored the project," Connery says. "This character starts off in a hopeless situation and makes major decisions.

"I'm attracted to playing someone who has the possibility of change, going from what he was to what he becomes.

"I'm also swayed by the writing. If I get a script from David Mamet,

**Sean Connery doesn't see anything wrong in romancing a lady half his age**

**'IF I WAS TOO OLD I'D STOP DOING IT!'**

LEFT: Sean Connery and Michelle Pfeiffer play lovers in *The Russia House*. RIGHT: Sean relaxes at home with his wife Micheline.

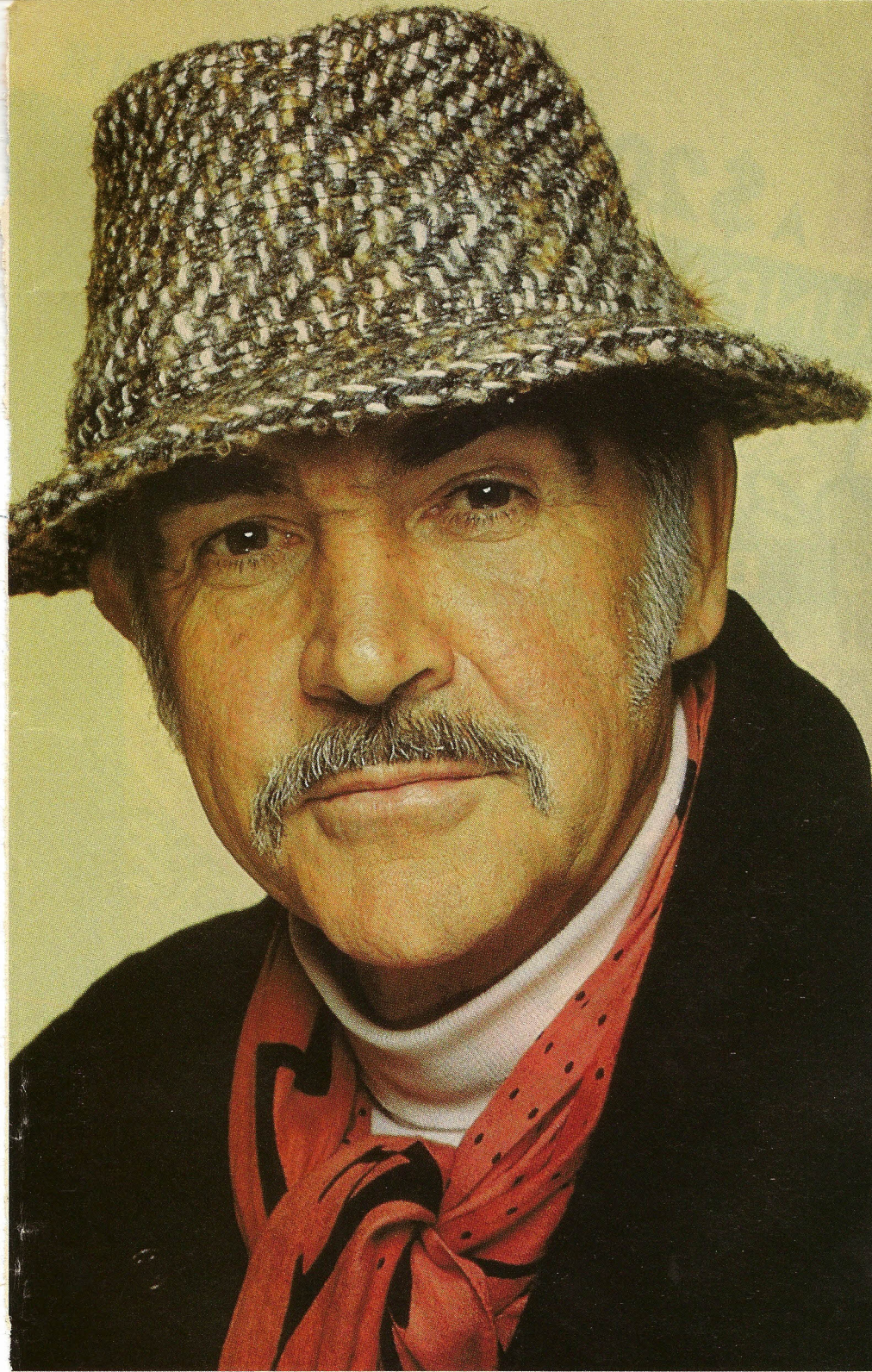


**6 If Sean was giving me any reason to be jealous, I wouldn't wait around. I'm not one of life's victims 9**

Tom Stoppard or Neil Simon, the writing immediately gets me, and that's the important thing."

Connery's history with the USSR began in 1963 with the James Bond





movie *From Russia With Love*.

He returned to the Soviet Union less than a year ago to film parts of *The Hunt For Red October* but says *The Russia House* marks the first major Hollywood film to be made there that is not a co-production.

It emerged from a friendship between the noted Australian director Fred Schepisi and Elem Klimov, who headed the Soviet Filmmakers Union.

A deal was struck in which the

Soviets pay for everything in the USSR and the Americans will reciprocate on a film the Soviets want to make in the West.

Connery says the USSR has changed dramatically since *From Russia With Love* and his other early Soviet film, *The Red Tent*, which co-starred Peter Finch.

"Back then," he says, "you felt you were in a real police state.

"I had a different driver every day so there would be no develop-

ment of friendship. The driver would take me to the gate of Mosfilms and the guard at the gate would have a machine gun and make my driver recite something to state he promised he wouldn't usurp the USSR.

"This time everything is so much more open, but that doesn't mean it's efficient.

"Russia is still a very arduous place to film, and making the movie was like pushing a quart into a pint bottle."

After finally winning his first Oscar, three years ago as Best Supporting Actor in *The Untouchables*, Connery has rocketed back into the limelight with roles in *The Presidio*, *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*, *Family Business* and *The Hunt For Red October*.

Next year he will produce and star in *The Last Days Of Eden*, the story of an eccentric doctor in a Brazilian rainforest.

Connery still chuckles over his "Sexiest Man Alive" title, joking: "There are very few sexy men dead!" But he's more concerned with the title "middle-aged."

"I once went for a medical for a film and the doctor said to me, 'You've got a good, strong heart-beat'. I was about 47 at the time and I said, 'Christ, what do you expect at 47?'

"He said it was good for a 'middle-aged' man.

"I asked what he meant by middle-aged and he said, 'How long do you think you're going to live — 94?'"

From 1962 to 1973, Connery was married to Australian actress Diane Cilento and, since 1975, to red-haired French-Moroccan painter Micheline Roquebrune. They live in Spain and Monte Carlo.

Micheline admits: "Women are always after him and I understand why. He is a very attractive man.

"But if Sean was giving me any reason to be jealous, I wouldn't wait around. I am not one of life's victims and Sean knows that."

Micheline, 54, was by her husband's side last year when there were fears that he was losing his power of speech.

Connery says: "I got laryngitis and a specialist gave me the news that I might have throat cancer.

"I was put on a month's silence and didn't know what the outcome might be."

The problem turned out to be polyps on Connery's vocal cords.

*From Jenny Cooney in Los Angeles*